

critical digest

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New York Theatre Diary

The Chair- Originals Only 7/14/54. Producers of Originals Only Tom Hill and Don Stuart present their new play. Helena Prince, Lawrence Clark, Elias Belfi, and Hal Oakley are featured. The writers also directed... Carousel scheduled to close July 25 at City Center... August Re-Opening Dates: Comedy in Music- Golden 8/2, Fifth Season at Cort 8/22, Almanac at Imperial 8/23... Midsummer's Night Dream- Met. Opera 9/21/54. Old Vic production limited run.

Current Theatre Reviews- Off Broadway Week

The Cretan Woman- Provincetown Playhouse 7/6/54. First production of Players Theatre won solid notices on Robinson Jeffers play. Funke, Times, Crist, Herald Tribune and Bazar, World Telegram & Sun thought group did commendable job with a difficult script. Jacqueline Brooks and Charles Aidman were applauded for outstanding jobs. Times drama editor credited group with courage, enterprise and good sense for showing Jeffers play in NY for first time. Herald Tribune reviewer thought the selection of the play may have been over ambitious, but the script is worth hearing and Brooks is certainly worth seeing. WT&S critic found excitement for the listener. He marked as the stellar achievement the embodiment of Theseus by Aidman, an actor with a remarkable bearing and dignity. On the con side McClain, Journal American, doubted if the audience was very much interested. While Herridge, Post, feared it was nearly all poetry and no theatre. Most critics panned the "air-cooled" as not.

Salvation on a String- Theatre de Lys 7/7/54. Though most of the critics found some interest in at least one of the 3 Paul Green one act plays presented by C.W. Christenberry, Jr. and David B. Graham. Chair Endowed, The No Count Boy and Supper For the Dead were the scripts produced in NYC for the first time. Critics agreed that first with John Kellog, Sylvia Leigh and Dottie Olsen offered little of interest. Though most found enjoyment in the second script, only Shanley, Times, thought it the best. Skedgwick Miller, Betty Ackerman and Wright King were featured in the comic folk tale. Most thought the last script with Fred O'Neal and Rosetta le Noire was the most important. Though Times man thought the tale of voodoo and violence leaned heavily on mumbo-jumbo. In conclusion though only Herridge, Post and McClain, Journal American, thought evening worth seeing. A professional, creditable job, rated Post critic. While latter billed it as a provocative though generally bewildering evening. World Telegram & Sun critic Bazar suggested the trilogy would make fine opera material. Kerr, Herald Tribune, believes what killed off the folk play is elaborately demonstrated in the first piece.

Summer Tryouts

Court Olympus, a new comedy-drama by Richard Reardon tried out at Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse was panned by Dash, Women's Wear and Doul, Variety. Former found it even hopeless for entertaining summer theatre patrons, while trade paper mugg noted that the characters never take form, beyond listlessly and everlastingly getting up from one settee to sit down upon another. Rita Gam also was panned in lead.

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 ' Off Broadway '
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See Page 1 For Digests of Off Broadway shows of week.

See Page 1 For Credit list of new Originals Only show.

Circle in the Square may return to their original site on 5 Sheridan Square. Group which has been hunting for a suitable arena theatre since they were forced to move their hit A Girl on the Via Flaminia uptown. Talks are now underway with the owner of the theatre for refurbishing the theatre so it will comply with Fire Department and Department of License rulings.

Second play of Proscenium Productions at Cherry Lane in Sept will be Jean Anouilh Thieves Carnival

Theatre De Lys may have a new owner next fall. Lucille Lortel, founder of the White Barn Theatre, Westport, Conn, is negotiating with Ralph Voorhis to purchase the building. A legal battle is promised.

Stage Right Players will present Rickey, a dramatization of Charles Calitri novel at Carnegie Recital Hall Aug 20... A Scene for Danny Fisher starring Leo Fuchs will be presented in English at the Downtown National Theatre Oct 27... Community Opera, Inc plans for "Dinner Opera" at Town Hall. Canceled when American Guild of Musical Artists union decided not to allow its members to appear without compensation.

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 ' Yiddish Theatre '
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Benjamin Rothman will present Sands in the Desert at the President Theatre in October... 10th Anniversary of Second Avenue Theatre will open Oct 28 with new Yiddish musical comedy Wish Me Luck

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 ' Vaudeville '
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Helen Kane and Gus Van head Palace stage show. Miller & Lee are also featured. "Return from the Sea" is current film.

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 ' Theatre Book Comments '
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"Shaw's Corner" by Stephen Winsten(Roy) presents a lively conversational portrait of GBS by his neighbor, recommends Moore, Times. Book deals with GBS last five years and is better than Winsten's earlier "Days with Shaw."

"Around Theatres", a collection of Max Beerbohm's essays (Simon & Schuster), was rated by Sheaffer, Eagle, as a volume of witty, polished writing best savored and enjoyed by the relaxed reader, not torn through or gulped in a hurry.

"Main Stem Stuff", is a book of amusing light verse on Broadway and some of its characters by press agent Tom Weatherly, okays Coleman, Mirror.

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 ' Theatre Record Comments '
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"Song of Norway" original cast album (Decca) provides extremely pleasant listening a decade after its first performances, approves Briggs, Times.

"Comedy in Music" disc of Victor Borge's current NYC one man show recorded by Columbia proves that even with just his voice and a piano, Borge emerges as an occasionally hilarious fellow with a fine musical wit, comments Herald Tribune reviewer.

"Student Prince Highlights" album (Decca) with Lauritz Melchior, Jane Wilson and Lee Sweetland received a mild favorable notice from Briggs, Times. Critic thought Melchior's quaint pronunciation of English did not make him ideal, while Wilson's voice was pleasant if not always firmly controlled.

Green Room Department

GOLDEN DOZEN... 12 plays picked by Chapman, News for "Theatre '54" annual published by Random House are: The Caine Mutiny Court Martial, Tea and Sympathy, Teahouse of the August Moon, Madam Will You Walk, The Confidential Clerk, Ondine, Oh Men Oh Women, The Solid Gold Cadillac, Sabrina Fair, The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker, The Pagoda Game, The Golden Apple. He left out Take A Giant Step because it failed to fulfill the quality and promise shown. While He Teared End as A Man defeated itself because it had a deliberate lack of good taste.

COLUMN TIPS... Second night critics got only hot dogs on Jones Beach Arabian Nights junket, while first night critics got a buffet dinner, reveals Winchell. Stars of Golden Apple have waived salary hikes due to start this month to keep show going, reports Algalena. Alfred Drake gives Eldest and Shakespeare lectures Thursday afternoons, notes Sullivan.

WHOSE DE LYS... Exactly who will and/or is the owner of Greenwich Village's Theatre de Lys is a story that is likely to continue for some time, explains Watts, News. Though Lucille Lortel announced that she would take over as owner next month, the Post Construction Company which took over the theatre when the original construction costs were not paid is unlikely to give up ownership. A theatre spokesman said that Lortel's right to buy was questionable since it is based on the sale to her of an "option to buy" by the original owner, William de Lys, who is reportedly in debt to the federal government for back taxes.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Vivien Leigh should withdraw from the over-arty and underpaying tendencies of Sir Laurence of late, urges Farrell, World Telegram & Sun. TV experiments with color and longer dramatic stories will keep many veteran actors off the Broadway stages, predicts Sylvester, News.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... The theatre is a very personal thing, it isn't a business, Mary K Frank, associate producer of Playwrights Company Tea and Sympathy told Sheaffer, Eagle. A producer's function should be like a captain's, to get the right director, the right players, and to know what this thing is all about. A lot of plays get all fouled up, she believes, because of productions that are uncertain. People basically want to hear men sing to pretty girls, St. John Terrell, Lambertville, NJ, Music Circus producer, explained to Torre, WT&S. He doubts very much if audiences are very much interested in scenery. Terrell hopes to have a new Music Circus running soon in Washington, D.C.

Pros & Cons

The Cretan Woman is a lively, worthwhile production of a very difficult play. Though far from perfect it features outstanding performances by Jacqueline Brooks and Charles Aidman. Their physical and histrionic powers make the production worth seeing. But go on a cool night for the advertised "air-cooled" house turns out to be equipped with a quartet of small fans.

Salvation on A String presents 3 different types of folk dramas by Paul Green. But only the popular "No Count Pop" is successful. The other two presented some fair to excellent acting wasted on second rate material. Paul Green fans just have to wait a few more years until the right actors and the right plays get together up North here.

\$1 million plus is the price Samuel Goldwyn paid for the screen rights to Guys and Dolls. Joseph L. Mankiewicz will write and direct the film, and Frank Loesser has agreed to write additional musical numbers. The film will start rehearsals in October and will be put before the cameras Jan 5.

Plays

The Remarkable Mr. Pennypacker closed...Helen Hayes will appear in a play at the NY City Center in December...Michael and Fay Kanin will adapt the Japanese prize winning film "Rashomon" for a Broadway stage production...Director Studio set up by Laura Malin and Anita Pantelli...A Maude Adams Memorial Center at Tannersville, NY, is being planned.

People

Harry Belafonte will star in a 6 month coast to coast road production of An Evening of Negro Folklore and Music in the fall...Shelley Winters will star in William Marchant's Faster! Faster!...Yale Wexler is subbing for Dick York, Tea and Sympathy while latter puts in 3 weeks National Guard training...Gabriel Pascal, who filmed the Shaw plays, died in NY at age 60.

Summer Playhouses

Abbard the Bandwagon, a revue with material from original "Bandwagon", "At Home Aboard", and "Flying Colors", will be presented at Bucks County Playhouse, New Hope, Pa July 19 with Roddy MacDowall starred...Ondale Musical Theatre, Wallingford, Conn, opened first season with Annie Get Your Gun starring Helen Gallagher.

Other Broadways

National company of Caine Mutiny Court Martial opened in San Francisco...Wonderful Town opened tour in Chicago...Free and Easy, a Blues Opera will be performed by cast of Porgy and Bess while on its current European tour...The Sea Gull production in Moscow drew 14 curtain calls opening night...The Wooden Dish, which Aldrich & Myers are producing, opens in London July 12 starring Joan Miller.

Theatre TV & Radio Notes

Peter Pan with Mary Martin and her daughter, which opens its road tour on the west coast next week, will be telecast on NBC TV at Christmas time...Moss Hart has given TV rights to Lady in the Dark to Max Leibman for an NBC TV spectacular...NBC-TV considering full hour weekly series of TV dramas from Margo Jones Theatre '54 in Dallas, Texas...Anthony Ross is featured in a new weekly CBS TV series "The Crew"... SEE "PLAYGOER'S GUIDE" for "THEATRE ON TV THIS WEEK" Listings.

Theatre Record Notes

RCA Victor has signed original cast album rights for two of next fall's musicals Silk Stockings and Fanny.

CRITICAL DIGEST
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